

The Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society

Natural History Section

Health and Safety on Field Visits

Field visits by the **Natural History Section** of the Leicester Lit. & Phil. can usually be considered to present only low risks. The leader of the meeting should take reasonable responsibility for the safety of the group. However, it should be remembered that health and safety is the **responsibility of everyone** in the group.

The following information is intended as a guide to commonsense safety procedures for Section leaders and members on field visits.

Planning and Briefing Participants

- The Section should never organise outdoor meetings which have elements of medium or high risk.
- Members must book for outdoor meetings in advance to avoid groups that are too large.
- The meeting leader should carry a list of participants. Participants should supply the leader (preferably at the booking stage) with details of an emergency contact in case of accident or sudden illness.
- The organiser should describe the nature of the meeting at the planning stage, i.e. the nature of the terrain, the expected length of the route, and start and estimated finish times.
- Participants must take note of the site description that the leader may provide and of any hazards that may be encountered.
- Participants must be asked not to wander off. If possible, site plans should be obtained to allow members to find their own way back should they become separated from the group. Participants who decide to leave the group must inform the leader. If a participant is aware of someone falling behind, they should alert the group leader.
- Everyone should be made aware of any unforeseen hazards that may arise and advice given to avoid the risk.
- Should the meeting involve contact with water the leader should ensure that everyone is aware of the need to cover any cuts or abrasions and to wash hands before eating.
- Though many people carry mobile phones the location of the nearest pay phone (or a location with a good signal) may be desirable as some sites may have poor phone reception.
- On sites with deer ensure that members know how to avoid the risk of tick bites leading to Lyme disease.
- There should be access to a suitable first aid kit. If the field visit is close to the meeting point, then the kit can be left in a car, otherwise it should be carried with the group.

Minimizing the Risks

Weather

- Consider cancelling the meeting if the weather could make the site dangerous or tiring to negotiate, also if members are not suitably dressed.
- Avoid woodlands in high winds.
- In hot weather ensure members are aware of the need for drinking water and sunblock.

Lyme Disease

This is an infection caused by a bacterium and is transmitted by the bite from a tick, usually associated with deer. Ticks are found on vegetation (often bracken) in grassland and woodland. Ticks are usually active between April and October.

- In areas where deer are to be found wear long trousers tucked into socks and avoid walking through bracken if possible.
- Brush clothing down before leaving the site and remove any ticks as soon as possible.
- If a rash develops around a bite seek medical help immediately.

Water

- Weils disease is a bacterial infection carried in rats' urine, which can contaminate water and wet river and canal banks.
- Avoid working in water where there is a possibility of contamination by rat urine.
- Wear waterproof gloves and cover all cuts and abrasions.
- Rinse all equipment, e.g. sampling trays and nets with clean water as soon as possible.
- Avoid contact with discoloured water, which may indicate a blue-green algal bloom.
- Wash hands thoroughly with clean water and soap or antiseptic wipes, especially before eating or drinking.

Fungus Forays

- Many of the forays occur in autumn woodland, so care should be taken not to be tripped by bramble runners and watch for hollows filled with fallen leaves.
- Follow the leaders' instruction regarding the picking and the sampling of the fungi.
- As above ensure that hands are cleaned thoroughly before eating or drinking.
- Our Outings are NOT intended as foraging events for home consumption. Members who can use a specimen for identification reasons might take home an example provided that it is not prohibited on the site e.g. from a SSSI.

Field Walking

- Be careful if entering a field containing stock. Only enter if they are calm and are known to be safe.
- Dogs should not be taken into fields with stock; a dog can cause the stock to become aggressive, even if the dog is on a lead.
- The Section does not usually allow dogs on the field meetings. Members should check when booking if the venue is suitable for a dog, or if the leader would prefer a no dogs policy on the trip he/she is leading.
- Members need to be aware that some plants are quite toxic and others contain sap that can cause skin problems.
- Members encouraged to let the leader or other participants know if they carry an EpiPen in the event of it needing to be used following a bee or wasp sting.